



ELL Plan Feedback Report

Key Findings

1. MMSD collected feedback on the ELL Plan via 14 meetings and a survey that yielded 281 responses.
2. Survey respondents expressed general support for the recommendations in the plan, with higher support from parents relative to staff, and higher support from Spanish language respondents relative to English.
3. Among open-ended comments and meeting notes, the most common comments fell under the themes of Student Needs and Equity, Expansion, and Access. Comments also were supportive in these areas, while the highest incidence of constructive comments related to Staffing.

Background

In September 2015, MMSD released the [draft English Language Learner \(ELL\) Plan](#), which defines our approach to providing high-quality supports and services for all of our English Language Learners. Earlier in 2015, the Research & Program Evaluation Office (RPEO) issued a report summarizing feedback collected from six information sessions designed to capture community input on the ELL plan, available at mmsd.org/research, and used to inform the draft plan.

This report focuses on feedback collected in response to the draft plan through two mechanisms:

1. a feedback form available in English, Spanish, and Hmong online and in paper form
2. meetings with parents, staff, and the community

In total, there are 14 meetings at which data was collected to inform this report: staff and family meetings at the five schools with new proposed programming due to the ELL Plan (Allis, Falk, Lake View, Schenk, Thoreau, ten meetings total), an additional meeting with Falk's PTO, a community meeting at Goodman Community Center, and two community meetings at Centro Hispano.

Analysis Methods

For all closed-ended responses to the survey, we calculated summary statistics, presented in tabular or graphical form in this report.

The ELL Plan Feedback Form included three open-ended questions that we analyzed in detail:

1. What do you see as the strengths of the plan?
2. What areas of the plan need improvement?
3. Please explain your answers (*a comment box provided after asking respondents to rate their agreement with elements of the plan numerically*)

Responses to these survey questions were coded and analyzed in NVivo.

All meetings included a notetaker responsible for capturing as much of the discussion as possible. Notes from these meetings also were coded and analyzed in NVivo.

Given the significant overlap across the questions and responses received, we chose to apply the same coding structure across all open-ended responses. All open-ended responses were coded in two stages, reflecting theme and tone. We constructed a list of themes after reviewing the comments for common terms and phrases and revised this list during the coding process as it became clear that additional codes were necessary. The first stage of coding resulted in eleven themes, which we then consolidated to eight due to commonalities. Coding for tone involved assigning comments as either supportive (expressing agreement) or constructive (expressing concerns) when relevant.

Meanwhile, because the meetings were structured around answering questions from attendees, we added a third category, "inquiring," for questions that had no obvious supportive or constructive tone (as well as a few survey responses). The topics discussed at these meetings aligned well with the comments collected through survey feedback, so we used the same list of themes to code comments at these meetings that we used to code the survey feedback.



Findings: Closed-Ended Responses

Between September 11 and October 20, 2015, MMSD received 281 unique responses to the ELL Plan Feedback survey. Of these responses, 179 were in English and 102 were in Spanish. There were no responses to the Hmong language form. Respondents were asked to choose their connection with MMSD, and the results of those questions are below in Table 1. The responses available were not mutually exclusive, so a respondent could pick all that applied.

Table 1: Respondent Characteristics by Language

Group	English	Spanish	Total
Total Respondents	179	102	281
Parent/guardian of an English-speaking (only) student	67	22	89
Parent/guardian of a student currently in a bilingual program (DBE or DL)	48	59	107
Parent/guardian of a student currently in an ESL program	10	25	35
Parent/guardian of a multilingual student not currently utilizing a language support program.	14	5	19
MMSD employee	65		65
Community member without children in MMSD	7		7
Other	11	2	13

About one in five respondents identified as MMSD employees, and 89% were parents of MMSD students. Among English-language respondents, almost a third were MMSD employees, but all Spanish language respondents were parents.

Respondents also were asked how familiar they were with the recommendations in the ELL Plan.

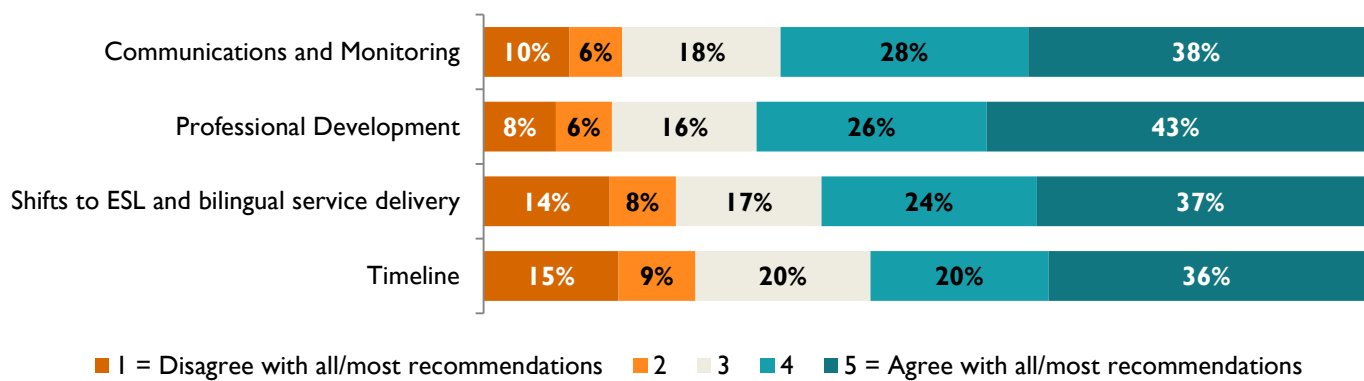
Table 2: Respondent Familiarity

Response	English	Spanish	Total
1 = Not at all	8%	30%	16%
2	9%	14%	11%
3	30%	22%	27%
4	28%	15%	23%
5 = Highly informed	25%	20%	23%

Respondents expressed mixed familiarity with the plan, as English-language respondents believed they were highly informed but Spanish language respondents expressed less familiarity.

Finally, respondents were asked to rate the degree to which they agreed with the recommendations of the ELL plan in four different areas, with a “1” representing “disagree with all/most recommendations” and a “5” representing “agree with all/most recommendations.” Respondents’ agreement appears in the graph below:

Figure 1: Overall Agreement with Recommendations

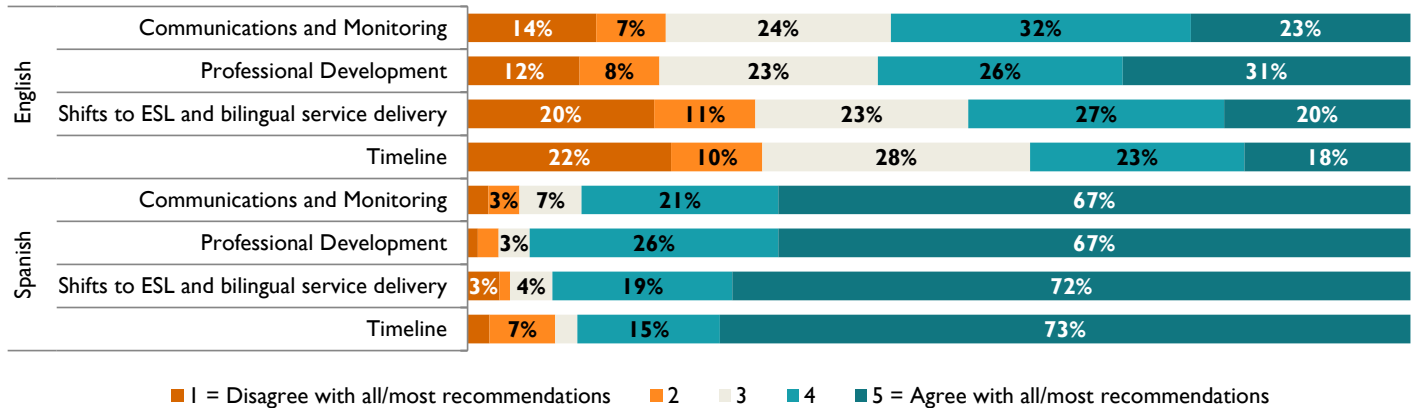


Overall, responses trended toward agreement. Communications and Monitoring and Professional Development had stronger support than the other two items.



The graph below shows agreement by language:

Figure 2: Agreement with Recommendations by Language



There were massive differences between English and Spanish language respondents' agreement with the recommendations in the plan. Spanish language respondents expressed almost universal agreement with the plan, while English-language respondents were much more mixed.

Findings: Open-Ended Responses

The eight codes we used for our analysis appear in the table below, along with a brief explanation of the topics associated with the code:

Table 3: Codes for Open-Ended Responses

Theme	Explanation
1 : Communication and Monitoring	Communication with families; documentation of practices; data systems
2 : Equity, Expansion, and Access	Expanding programming; more students served; more opportunities; timing; locations
3 : Evidence	Data or other evidence showing success of proposed models or success of DLI/DBE in MMSD
4 : Instructional Model	50:50 vs. 90:10 instruction; other instructional approaches
5 : School Unity	Community building; DLI vs non-DLI classes
6 : PD and Training	Staff training; education; tuition reimbursement
7 : Staffing	Available staff to meet needs; teacher quality
8 : Student Learning and Needs	Learning needs of English Language Learners; bilingualism & language acquisition

The table below shows the frequency and tone of all comments associated with each theme:

Table 4: Frequency and Tone of Comments by Code

Theme	Constructive	Supportive	Percent Supportive	Inquiring	Total	Percent of Total Coded Comments
1 : Communication and Monitoring	25	27	52%	9	61	7%
2 : Equity, Expansion, and Access	71	95	57%	44	210	23%
3 : Evidence	22	7	24%	30	59	7%
4 : Instructional Model	47	29	38%	58	134	15%
5 : School Unity	38	10	21%	3	51	6%
6 : PD and Training	27	37	58%	14	78	9%
7 : Staffing	55	5	8%	38	98	11%
8 : Student Learning and Needs	48	143	75%	24	215	24%

The three most common topics for comment were Student Learning and Needs; Equity, Expansion, and Access; and Instructional Model. Student Learning and Needs; PD and Training; and Equity, Expansion, and Access had more supportive than constructive comments. The highest percentage of constructive comments related to staffing.



The next table includes frequency and tone for the survey feedback responses only:

Table 5: Frequency and Tone of Comments by Code, Survey Feedback Only

Theme	Constructive	Supportive	Percent Supportive	Inquiring	Total	Percent of Total Coded Comments
1 : Communication and Monitoring	21	26	55%	6	53	8%
2 : Equity, Expansion, and Access	64	85	57%	11	160	25%
3 : Evidence	19	6	24%	4	29	4%
4 : Instructional Model	46	23	33%	4	73	11%
5 : School Unity	35	10	22%	1	46	7%
6 : PD and Training	24	37	61%	4	65	10%
7 : Staffing	48	5	9%	5	58	9%
8 : Student Learning and Needs	33	129	80%	4	166	26%

The two most common topics for comment were Student Learning and Needs and Equity, Expansion, and Access. Student Learning and Needs; PD and Training; and Equity, Expansion, and Access had the most supportive comments. Most other topics had a majority of comments with a constructive tone, particularly for Staffing and School Unity.

When analyzing the survey feedback data, it became obvious that the themes differed tremendously between Spanish and English language respondents. The table below illustrates those differences:

Table 6: Frequency and Tone of Comments by Code, Survey Feedback Only by Language

Theme	Spanish						English					
	Constructive	Supportive	Percent Supportive	Inquiring	Total	Percent of Total Coded Comments	Constructive	Supportive	Percent Supportive	Inquiring	Total	Percent of Total Coded Comments
1 : Communication and Monitoring	7	12	63%	1	20	11%	14	14	50%	5	33	7%
2 : Equity, Expansion, and Access	10	10	50%	1	21	12%	54	75	58%	10	139	29%
3 : Evidence	2	1	33%	0	3	2%	17	5	23%	4	26	5%
4 : Instructional Model	4	12	75%	0	16	9%	42	11	21%	4	57	12%
5 : School Unity	0	2	100%	0	2	1%	35	8	19%	1	44	9%
6 : PD and Training	1	9	90%	0	10	6%	23	28	55%	4	55	12%
7 : Staffing	9	1	10%	2	12	7%	39	4	9%	3	46	10%
8 : Student Learning and Needs	16	74	82%	1	91	52%	17	55	76%	3	75	16%

Among Spanish language responses, the majority of comments focused on Student Needs and were supportive, with less coverage across other themes. Among English language responses, comments were much more broadly distributed.

The paragraphs that follow include a brief discussion of each theme.

Supportive comments about **Communication and Monitoring** showed support for the commitment stated in the plan to communicate with families and collect more data to monitor services. Constructive comments suggested the need for even greater communication that considers “language barriers... and the different roles of parents in the school in other cultures” to open a “meaningful dialogue with communities.”

Equity, Expansion, and Access comments focused on general support for the expansion of bilingual and DLI offerings. One respondent cited “more equitable access for all interested” and another said “I see many more students getting what they need.” At a community meeting, parents from Spanish-speaking households said “we wonder why people are against the plan” and expressed that “these minds we have to change... [need to see that] we as Latino



parents are present in the education of our children.” Respondents also expressed support for increased outreach to communities currently less represented in DLI. An English-speaking parent argued that “Dual Language Immersion could be a magnet to [my neighborhood school].” A Spanish language survey respondent supported the plan because “our children are as important and special as yours.” Some respondents expressed concerns that DLI programming in particular did not have consistent benefits across groups; as one respondent said, “we tend to see more involved families drawn specifically to DLI programs instead of non-DLI environments.” Others, particularly among Spanish language respondents, wished DLI programming was available at even more schools than those proposed under the plan.

When discussing **Evidence**, respondents expressed concerns about the evidence used to determine the recommendations in the plan. For example, one respondent said “no data has been provided that concretely demonstrates the benefits of the current implementation of ELL/DLI within a subset of MMSD schools;” another said “I’m not sure the DLI results justify expanding the program.” In general, respondents in this area wanted to see more evidence that DLI was effective locally, and several also wondered about the basis for the assertion that students should acquire English proficiency in 5-7 years.

The **Instructional Model** prompted the most inquiring comments from respondents, with many questions about the specifics and logistics of DLI programming. Respondents were curious about things like instructional time in each language and how DLI programming works for different subjects, including math and specials. Concerns centered around the proposed shift from a 90/10 to a 50/50 model of instruction. Some respondents wondered if a 50/50 model would result in too little time spent receiving instruction in Spanish; one respondent’s cited concerns that “transitioning to a 50/50 model may increase the incidence of Spanish language loss and lessen the positive effects of a bilingual education” were representative. Others asked for “more information... on the research behind [90/10 vs 50/50].”

Under **School Unity**, supportive respondents believed DLI “encourages relationships among people from different backgrounds” and said “it is very possible to create more cohesion among the DLI and [English only] strands within a school.” One parent expressed that “the value this program places on another culture and language in the schools is huge... it gives me goosebumps when I go into the classroom and the students are speaking in both languages and just loving each other.” Constructive comments included concerns that DLI “will divide schools.” One parent at a school that would introduce DLI under the plan believed “providing this community with a reason to segregate would undo years of great community building.” There was particular concern about the non-DLI classrooms in DLI schools, including concentration of students with high significant academic and behavioral needs, and how program expansion would impact those who did not participate.

PD and Training comments were overwhelmingly supportive of the idea of additional training and PD for staff to support the needs of ELLs; as one respondent said, “thank you for being intentional about this in the plan.” Tuition reimbursement for ELL certification also was mentioned several times as a benefit of the plan. Others, though, questioned the effectiveness of PD and the capacity of MMSD to support the needed training. In addition, some staff wondered about the fairness of the plan for tuition reimbursement to staff who have already paid for licensure; as one teacher stated, “for the hundreds of teachers who worked second jobs and took huge loans to pay for bilingual and ESL certifications, it’s frustrating to have never been compensated more for those certifications and now have colleagues get tuition assistance to get it themselves.”

Staffing comments were almost uniformly constructive and focused on the challenge of finding adequate staff to support the plan. As one respondent noted, it is “hard to find truly bilingual staff – how will you find even more?” Others expressed concerns about the logic of “the expansion of DLI programs that cannot be sustained with current staff” and noted “it is already difficult to find teachers qualified for the DLI programs that exist.” A third asked “what university partnerships must begin to support the need for additional certified personnel?” Adequate staffing, including not just numbers but quality, was a common and consistent concern. Respondents also were concerned about what would happen to existing teachers who lacked the credentials to teach in bilingual classrooms. One staff member expressed a “nervous feeling there is a chance teachers who worked hard may have to leave.”



Finally, comments about **Student Learning and Needs**, which generally were very supportive, agreed with paying attention to the instructional needs of English Language Learners. One respondent said the plan demonstrated “the district’s commitment to ensuring ELLs’ rights to bilingual education” and another credited the district for “paying long overdue attention to an often overlooked but growing percentage of our kids,” while a third stated that DLI was “an enormous benefit for our children and our community as a whole.” An interesting thread within this theme related to discussions of bilingualism. A majority of Spanish language survey responses specifically referenced student bilingualism as something they liked about the plan; one Spanish-speaking parent’s comment that “it is very beautiful because they learn two languages at the same time... it helps them to not lose their native language” was representative. This clear and consistent agreement across Spanish language responses appeared even more stark when looking at English language responses, which rarely referenced bilingualism; supportive English language respondents tended to focus on the expansion of programming and opportunities as the greatest benefits of the plan. Finally, respondents generally were supportive of the Hmong DBE programming proposed at Lake View, but some thought this program was not enough to serve the needs of the Hmong community and desired even more Hmong programming. Some constructive comments in this area came from parents who were not native English speakers but did not want their children receiving ESL services at all or were expressing dissatisfaction with existing services.

Other Observations

When analyzing the data, some clear trends emerged that are worthy of further discussion.

MMSD employees who participated in the feedback process expressed the most concerns about the plan.

When looking at the closed-ended survey responses, employees showed lower levels of agreement with elements of the plan than parents overall (although their agreement was similar to that of English-speaking parents). In general, their concerns related to how the ELL plan would affect their schools and job statuses. Similar concerns appeared during staff meetings, and families also expressed concerns about losing teachers from their schools. Although staff were generally supportive of the opportunities afforded by the plan, it is clear that they want more information about what the plan means for their professional futures, both short and long term.

Spanish and English language respondents expressed both different levels of support and different types of comments. We discussed earlier that among survey respondents, support for the ELL plan was much higher among Spanish speakers than English speakers. Spanish speakers also expressed much less familiarity with the plan than English speakers, suggesting that their support is driven by something other than the specific details of the plan. Spanish language survey respondents frequently told stories about the positive experiences of their children and the benefits they had received or would receive, almost always referring to DLI in particular. Survey responses from English speakers, though, tended to speak much more to plan specifics, including evidence and logistics.

Clarity of communication about the plan will be key. One survey respondent’s comment that “a lot of fear of change comes from lack of understanding” seems prescient. Many respondents who were opposed to the plan stated they were opposed because they did not see compelling local evidence that it had been successful or thought additional input was needed from families and schools. Several respondents also complained about the difficulty of understanding the plan, including educational terms with which they were unfamiliar, and requested a shorter summary with less jargon. Some comments also indicated misconceptions, including fears that this plan meant that current DLI sites would no longer continue to operate or that all students would be required to participate. Altogether, these concerns perhaps call for the creation of an FAQ document to address common concerns about plan development and components.

Many concerns about the plan relate to the impact on non-DLI students. Although the expansion of DLI to new sites is only one component of the plan, it should be clear from this report that DLI is the hot-button issue on which almost all feedback focused. Individuals sharing feedback wondered about the impact of DLI programming on students not in DLI but in DLI schools, discussed earlier. Others questioned why speakers of other languages besides Spanish were not receiving similar opportunities.